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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SARAJEVO 001510

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FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GORDON ENGLAND

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF DEPUTY
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE GORDON ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER

1

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Thirteen years after Dayton, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a deeply divided society. Dayton's division of the country into two entities - one overwhelmingly Serb (Republika Srpska - RS), and one divided between a Bosniak (Muslim) majority and a Croat minority (the Federation) - lacks legitimacy among all three constituent peoples. Serbs now routinely talk of separation, which Bosniaks interpret as a final push by Serbs to finish what they started with the Srebrenica genocide and ethnic cleansing of the 1992-1995 war. Bosniaks demand justice for the crimes committed against them, including abolition of the RS, which they argue was built upon those crimes; many Bosniaks leaders also preidtc a return to war if Serbs push for separation. Croats, emboldened by the nationalist claims of Serbs and Bosniaks, now demand their own territorial unit within Bosnia, a move that would make Bosnia's break-up easier and perhaps inevitable. These themes have dominated political discourse for close to two years, and as a consequence, despite Bosnia's formal progress towards EU and NATO membership, the political situation in Bosnia has continued to deteriorate.

¶2. (C/NF) Summary Continued: One bright spot in an otherwise gloomy picture is defense reform - the most successful state-level reform to date. The U.S. has been key to defense reform's success, and the Bosnians know it. The U.S. is also perceived as the most reliable guarantor of the country's future. With both these issues in mind, you can expect Minister Cikota to press for continued U.S. engagement here generally, and for U.S. flag officer leadership at NATO's Sarajevo HQ specifically - points Presidency member Komsic are likely to echo. In your meetings with Cikota and Komsic, you will want to underscore the U.S. commitment to Bosnia. At the same time, you will want to caution that Bosnia is only at the beginning of the road to NATO membership, a membership that must be earned by implementing the reforms necessary to ensure Bosnia is a productive member of the Alliance. Your trip comes as we have just told Bosnia that their troops will no longer be needed in Iraq. Bosnian leaders have already expressed interest in future opportunities to contribute to international missions. If there is a role for them in ISAF, now is the time to start talking about how they can contribute. END SUMMARY

Political Climate Continues to Deteriorate

¶3. (C) Bosnia's June 16 signing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU provided only a brief respite from nationalist name-calling among Bosniak, Serb, and Croat politicians. Politicians could have seized upon

the July 21 arrest of ICTY indictee Radovan Karadzic to advance reconciliation here, but instead sought to exploit it to advance their narrow, nationalist political agendas. With the approach of the October 5 municipal elections Bosnia's political leaders have further ratcheted up their nationalist rhetoric: the Serbs speculating about a "peaceful separation" of Republika Srpska (RS); the Croats openly calling for creation of a third entity; and the Bosniaks advocating constitutional reforms that would abolish the RS. Keenly aware of the fragile ethnic balances of the Dayton Accords, U.S. policy has been clear: there can be no RS secession, no unilateral abolition of the entities, and no third entity. Not surprisingly, in this environment there is little scope for politicians to reach meaningful agreements that would advance Bosnia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. As a consequence, the reform process, including the next steps in defense reform, has stalled.

Defense Reform: Fragile Progress, More to Do

¶4. (C) Defense reform remains one of the biggest success stories in Bosnia since Dayton. Since abolishing the two entity-level militaries and ministries of defense and creating a single state institution in their place in 2005, Bosnia has taken the first steps to create a unified, effective military. The government has developed a clear and direct command and control structure, and with active U.S. support and engagement, a legally consistent and transparent way to manage the transition of the Joint Chief of Staff. The new state-level institutions met the conditions for PfP membership in 2006 and for an Intensified Dialogue in April

SARAJEVO 00001510 002 OF 003

¶2008. Nonetheless, for Bosnia to qualify for MAP, to say nothing of NATO membership -- a top priority for political leaders here --there remains much work to be done, and many reforms will require engagement of state institutions other than the Ministry of Defense. You will want to stress this point with your Bosnian interlocutors, since officials outside the Ministry of Defense have been so slow to grasp the magnitude of the challenge ahead or the role they would be expected to play in meeting it.

Property Issues Remain Critical

¶5. (C) Among other things, the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces must still implement the political agreement on moveable defense property reached in February -- again only after robust U.S. and NATO engagement -- by selling, donating or destroying excess weapons and ammunition. (Note: These weapons formerly belonged to the two entities. End Note) Despite the agreement and clear practical advantages, brigade commanders are reluctant to consolidate stored weapons or ammunition -- instead, excess munitions have remained where they had lain as property of the entity armies. The inability to move resources around means that, despite integration of the military's command structure, the reality on the ground has changed little for BiH's infantry: a Bosnian-Serb infantry soldier, for example, lives in the RS, reports to a Bosnian-Serb Battalion commander, and works in the RS guarding weapons formerly owned by the RS army that lie in a storage facility that itself still belongs to the RS.

¶6. (C) An agreement on immovable defense property is necessary to allow the armed forces to sell excess real estate, consolidate its weapons, and free its forces from the taxing burden of guarding excess sites. It is also one of the five objectives set by the Peace Implementation Council as a pre-condition for closing the Office of the High Representative (Bosnia's international governor-general). Unfortunately, the immovable defense property issue has become a proxy for an existential debate between Serbs and Bosniaks about the nature of the Bosnian state. The Serbs

insist that all immoveable property belongs to the entities, though they claim they are prepared to allow the state full usage rights. The Bosniaks insist that all property already belongs to the state. During your meetings with Bosnian officials, you will want to stress the importance to Bosnia's NATO aspirations of resolving immoveable defense property issues. You will also want to stress that the resulting transfer agreement, which must be signed and approved by the state and the two entities, must meet the needs the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces.

NATO Aspirations: Substance Matters

17. (C) Since being invited to join PfP in 2006 (and reinforced by the invitation to join Intensified Dialogue at Bucharest), NATO membership has been, along with EU membership, one of the two uniting goals of a divided country. Most Bosnians believe NATO membership is absolutely necessary for their country's long-term peace and prosperity, and many believe it within reach. The government's stated objective is a Membership Action Plan (MAP) by NATO's next summit, and some are hoping for an invitation to join by that time. This overly optimistic prognosis is indicative of a broad lack of understanding of the implications and requirements of NATO membership. As a result, we are confronted with the delicate task of keeping the Bosnians motivated, while simultaneously injecting a dose of realism into the discussions. There has been little public discussion about what the path forward entails, particularly the necessity of reform across the board, including in civilian institutions. Some, including several (mainly Bosniak) politicians, believe Bosnia is owed NATO membership because of what they perceive as the international community's failure to prevent the tragedies of the 1992-1995 war. You will want to underscore to your interlocutors that NATO membership is to be earned, and that this requires a sustained commitment to reforms across the board.

Bosnia in Iraq and Afghanistan

18. (C) I have told the Bosnian leadership that there will be

SARAJEVO 00001510 003 OF 003

no need for future deployment of Bosnian troops in Iraq. Now we have a clear interest in encouraging Bosnia to take up another international mission, namely Afghanistan. We believe a Bosnian contribution to another overseas mission is politically feasible. Inasmuch as you are able to tell Bosnia's leaders about the opportunities for a Bosnian contribution to ISAF, now is a great time to open a dialogue that will lead to future deployments, serving our needs in ISAF as well as contributing to our defense reform goals in Bosnia. Bosnia's nine deployments to Iraq have served as a positive model for the future of their armed forces -- a small, NATO inter-operable and completely integrated force focused on providing support for international missions. It's also a back-door means of integrating Bosnia's military, as we have successfully pressed the Bosnians to ensure that all overseas deployments be multi-ethnic. The foreign deployment of a company would effectively create an integrated battalion in the BiH Armed Forces, because of the need to train simultaneously both a reserve and a follow-up company.

America's Commitment to Bosnia

19. (C/NF) Despite the signing of the SAA, many Bosnians remain skeptical about Europe's commitment to the country. This anxiety reflects Europe's record during the 1992-1995 war, notably its association with UNPROFOR, erratic European leadership in other areas (e.g., police reform), and widespread perceptions that the European successor to NATO's SFOR, EUFOR, is a weak reed. As a consequence, Bosnians,

particularly on defense and security issues, look to the U.S. for leadership and worry that the U.S. will disengage. The decision to replace General Wightman as the Commander of NATO HQ with a European will be viewed as a drawdown of American military presence. We expect Minister Cikotic to reclama this decision as one of his principal points to you. With this in mind, you will want to emphasize that the U.S. commitment to Bosnia's security is enduring. You can also underscore that we plan to remain engaged and visible even as our permanent foot-print shrinks. You might cite the September 16-18 visit of U.S.S. Roosevelt to Neum and the September 2009 NATO PfP Exercise Combined Endeavor in Banja Luka as examples of continued U.S. commitment to Bosnia's security.

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